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SUBJECT: BERMUDA: GOVERNMENT PRESENTS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR COMING  
YEAR

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#### Summary

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11. (U) Governor Sir Richard Gozney reconvened Parliament on November 6 and delivered the Throne Speech setting out the Government of Bermuda's (GOB) legislative agenda for the coming year. Speaking on behalf of the government, the Governor put the spotlight on education and youth and the need to prepare them to be successful members of society. He also proposed finding a modern solution to address racial discrimination and suggested unspecified amendments to the Human Rights Act that would prevent discrimination of "any person." The speech noted the GOB would create an office to assist Bermudians denied entry into the United States to obtain waivers, as well as draft amendments that would implement some of the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund. The speech also touched on examining gaming as a way to invigorate the declining tourism industry. It was notable for its brevity and its "do-able" focus on the socio-economic issues that most affect the Bermudian public, but glossed over plans to revive the economy. End summary.

#### Preparing All Youth for the Future

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12. (U) The government led off with initiatives to reform public education, with an emphasis on at-risk students. Citing a new study that revealed that more than 50 percent of black male students leave the school system before graduation, the speech proposed measures to strengthen the assessment of at-risk students, implement specialized instruction for boys, and improve school counseling. On the subject of education generally, the speech noted that the adoption of the Cambridge International Curriculum will provide international recognition for Bermuda's diploma and will also require the certification of teachers to meet its more rigorous standards.

#### Addressing Human Rights Issues

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13. (U) The speech called for a thorough review of the Commission on Unity and Racial Equality to address racial discrimination, noting that the lack of progress in this area requires a new, modern vehicle to address historical racial

inequities. In addition, the speech noted that the GOB will amend the Human Rights Act to prevent discrimination of any person. In the short time since the speech, the question of whether the government will include discrimination based on sexual orientation has again gained prominence.

#### Helping Bermudians with Criminal Records Travel to the US

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14. (U) The speech promised the creation of a "Visa Waiver Assistance Program" to encourage Bermudians "to stay off the list of prohibited persons and moreover provide assistance to those requiring visas to enter our nearest neighbouring country, the United States." On November 7, the daily Royal Gazette quoted the Consul General as saying, "The U.S. Consulate welcomes the Premier's announcement in today's Throne Speech about opening an office to assist Bermudians to apply for waivers of ineligibilities. The Consulate endorses his initiative, which will pass the message, especially among Bermuda's youth, that the consequences of illegal activity are life-long. We look forward to working with this new office."

#### Settling the Gambling Issue Once and For All

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15. (U) The speech addressed the contentious proposal of gambling as a way to bolster the faltering tourism industry. Unlike the Premier's failed end run around his backbench to pass a cruise ship gaming bill in July, the GOB will introduce a

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formal discussion paper on gaming that will promote a thorough debate based on "dispassionate research." The debate, if positive, could lead to a new policy statement followed by the introduction of enabling legislation. The legalization of gambling is a very controversial subject in Bermuda, widely opposed by the religious groups, but having the strong support of Premier Brown - who is also Tourism Minister.

#### Implementing International Monetary Fund (IMF) Recommendations

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16. (U) Following up on recommendations made to Bermuda by the IMF in 2008, the GOB will introduce amendments to the Banks and Deposit Companies Act to strengthen the intervention powers of the Bermuda Monetary Authority in the case of troubled banks.

#### Glossing Over the Economy?

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17. (U) In a November 9 editorial, the Royal Gazette complained that the speech lacked boldness and was to some extent misleading. It pointed out the speech's "astonishingly upbeat assessment on the economy, especially given the almost weekly news of job losses and the gloomy outlook." The critique also noted that the speech lacks "almost any indication of how Government plans to revive the economy."

Comment

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(SUB) The Premier had promised a "bold" speech; however, this was anything but. Instead, the government hit the top issues of the day: education and health, while skimming over potential economic problems. Clocking in at less than twenty minutes, the government mentioned a number of initiatives it plans for the next year, without providing much detail. This could likely be because the government is still debating these policy issues.SHELTON